



February 17, 2009

Dear Members of the House of Representatives:

Outdoor Industry Association, the premier outdoor products trade group in the U.S. representing over 4000 businesses, urges your strong support for S.22, the "Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009." Passage of this legislation will provide permanent recognition to BLM's National Landscape Conservation System, create three new national parks, and designate several national trails and scenic rivers. This legislation will lead to lasting and significant economic opportunities for local communities and outdoor businesses, promote a healthy and affordable lifestyle for families to enjoy and preserve our iconic public lands and waters for future generations.

In the U.S., three out of every four Americans participate in outdoor recreation each year, and public lands, whether they are national trails, national parks or wilderness areas, play a vital role in the lives of Americans. The outdoor recreation economy provides \$289 billion annually in retail sales and services, supports nearly 6.5 million jobs and generates \$88 billion in annual state and national tax revenue. In short, Americans need and passion for outdoor recreation is a critical economic engine for our nation.

As we find ourselves in an expanding economic crisis, it's not surprising that the issue of the economy has found its way into the debate of the public lands bill, and rightly so. During and after recessions, history has shown that American families return in large numbers to affordable outdoor activities like camping, fishing, hunting and hiking. Last year while the national economy slowed dramatically, camping equipment and accessories grew in demand and retail sales increased as much as 20% and overall outdoor retail sales increased by 5%. In addition, many state and federal lands saw visitations and outings climb as more and more families returned to affordable outdoors activities.

Meanwhile, uninformed interest groups are circulating inaccuracies with regard to wilderness designations by claiming that it is closed off to recreation. These claims are completely false. In fact, Wilderness areas provide, to a great extent, some of the finest recreation experiences because of the untouched, natural landscapes. In addition to hiking, camping, backpacking, rock climbing, snowshoeing, backcountry skiing, canoeing, rafting, kayaking, wildlife and bird watching, you can also, ride horses, hunt game and fish. These wild areas are the backbone of the outdoor recreation lifestyle and play a significant role in maintaining healthy outdoor businesses and promoting affordable tourism for nearby communities.

Your support of the "Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009" is crucial to the economic health of the \$289 billion outdoor retail industry, the over 4,000 outdoor business and local communities. While our public lands do have value for their potential extractive resources, wild lands provide an even greater and longer lasting value to the communities and businesses that support tourism, recreation and an overall healthy outdoor lifestyle. At a time when millions of Americans will seek more affordable outdoor activities, it makes sense for Congress to recognize the contributions of businesses that depend on the preservation of wild lands and the significant impact these lands will make to the public wealth and well being.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Frank Hugelmeyer".

Frank Hugelmeyer  
President & CEO  
Outdoor Industry Association